Urban Forestry

GOAL 4.12

Trees are recognized by Tukwila citizens, businesses, City staff and decision-makers for their benefits to the environment, urban infrastructure and their aesthetic value.

POLICIES

4.12.1 Develop a formal urban forest management plan to promote and guide preservation, restoration and maintenance of a sustainable urban forest, using the goals and policies of this chapter as a basis for guidance.

4.12.2 Ensure that the benefits of trees are factored into site design and permit decisions.

4.12.3 Ensure that regulations recognize that larger trees provide more benefits than small trees.

4.12.4 Seek to create and fund an urban forester/municipal arborist position within the City, or contract for such services, to provide expertise for urban forest management planning, oversight of tree planting and maintenance, and assistance to all City departments that have responsibilities for tree management.

4.12.5 Educate the public, elected officials and City staff about the importance of and benefits provided by trees in Tukwila.

4.12.6 Develop tree valuation methods to reflect the value trees provide, for use in assessing fines, determining damages or estimating loss of tree benefits.

4.12.7 Identify funding sources to support urban forestry planning and management, and establish an urban forestry budget and account.

4.12.8 Consider developing an "exceptional" or "heritage" tree program to foster tree appreciation in the community.

4.12.9 Encourage public involvement in urban forest stewardship through volunteer events, free training workshops, and other means.

GOAL 4.13

Overall City-wide tree canopy increased to a total of 29% by 2034.

*Canopy cover in individual zoning categories increased by 2034 as listed below:**

Light Industrial zones: 3% increase from 20%, to achieve 23% cover

Heavy Industrial zones: 1% increase from 9%, to achieve 10% cover

Tukwila Urban Center and Tukwila South: 5% increase from 13%, to achieve 18% cover

Office and Commercial: 3% increase from 29 %, to achieve 32% cover

Parks: 5% increase from 38%, to achieve 43% cover

Public Rights-of-Way: Increase canopy coverage through street tree planting. Specific canopy goal to be established based on future assessment.

No net loss of canopy cover in individual zoning categories, as listed below:

Low-Density Residential: Maintain current City-wide canopy coverage of 47%

Medium- and High-Density Residential: Maintain current City-wide coverage of 40%

POLICIES

4.13.1 Promote tree retention throughout the City by:

- implementing educational programs for property owners and managers regarding tree selection and care, applicable regulations, selecting a qualified arborist, and other issues;
- except for hazard trees or trees that interfere with underground or overhead utilities, prohibiting removal of any tree four inches or larger in diameter at breast height (dbh) on all undeveloped property without an approved development or other land use permit, to provide the opportunity to preserve healthy trees during development;
- promoting the mutual goals of tree protection and urban development through the implementation of incentive programs and flexible site development regulations, especially to retain tree groves; and
- requiring financial assurances for required tree replanting and maintenance.

4.13.2 Improve retention of trees on steep slopes.

* *NOTE: Some public rights-of-way (such as WSDOT's) are not included in the total City-wide canopy calculation. Rights-of-way adjacent to public streets (i.e., where street trees would be planted) are included in each zoning category.*

4.13.3 Continue to protect trees in sensitive areas and the shoreline through relevant regulations.

4.13.4 Ensure that required replacement trees at maturity will have equivalent or larger canopies than the removed tree(s), except where existing or future infrastructure and/or public or private utilities impede the planting of large trees.

4.13.5 Develop mechanisms for protecting tree roots for public and private surface and underground infrastructure installation, including – in some cases – requiring the presence of a certified arborist when working in the critical root zone; replacement of trees where damage is unavoidable; and either requiring replanting or payment into a tree replacement fund as compensation, if planting on-site is not feasible. Establish reasonable procedures to ensure consideration of tree root protection during routine or emergency maintenance of existing utilities, and provide training to City and other public utility maintenance staff on root protection techniques.

4.13.6 Establish criteria for requiring professional assessment and corrective actions by property owners who damage code-required landscaping, street trees, or other required trees by topping, poor pruning practices or root disturbance.

4.13.7 Where trees are regulated and required replacement trees cannot be accommodated on a site, establish procedures for off-site planting of replacement trees or payment into a dedicated tree replacement fund.

4.13.8 Develop tree planting and urban forest rehabilitation programs for City parks and other publicly-owned lands. Collaborate with other agencies, such as Washington's Department of Transportation, to promote planting in highway interchanges and other locations.

4.13.9 Collaborate with other government, non-profit organization, school and private sector entities, to promote urban forest management and restoration.

4.13.10 Provide flexibility in the landscape code to promote increased tree planting and/or planting of large canopy trees, and reward the preservation of existing healthy trees to assist in meeting the City's canopy goals.

4.13.11 Evaluate current parking lot landscape requirements to identify opportunities to increase tree canopy.

GOAL 4.14

Tukwila's streetscapes and landscaped areas are sustainable and attractive, and its urban forest is healthy, diverse, and safe.

POLICIES

4.14.1 Develop tree/urban forest inventories and assess the health of trees and forests in Tukwila's public spaces.

4.14.2 Develop maintenance plans and programs for trees on City property or rights-of-way to ensure that maintenance pruning is properly carried out, that diseases and pest infestations are managed, that hazardous trees are identified and managed in a timely manner to reduce risks, and that invasive vegetation is properly managed.

4.14.3 Modify landscape code, and educate property owners, property managers, landscape maintenance companies and tree companies to promote best practices for soil preparation, planting techniques, pruning, trenching and general tree care.

4.14.4 Ensure that landscaping and replacement trees in new development or re-development are properly cared for and thrive in perpetuity, through such means as maintenance agreements, monitoring and enforcement.

4.14.5 Develop a mechanism to ensure that tree removal and maintenance companies have the necessary qualifications and liability insurance to work in Tukwila.

4.14.6 Modify landscape code to require diversity of tree species in landscape plantings and consideration of species already present in the vicinity.

4.14.7 Establish minimum standards and landscape specifications to ensure long-term tree health for street trees, required landscape trees and required replacement trees, including minimum soil volume, soil quality, plant quality, planting techniques, irrigation, mulching, tree pruning, and prohibition of topping.

4.14.8 Develop an approved/recommended tree list for street trees, landscape perimeter planting and parking lots that recognizes the importance of the concept of "right tree, right place", taking into account available planting space and infrastructure/utility conflicts, and that considers the importance of species diversity, climate conditions, canopy coverage goals, allergy issues, urban wildlife benefits, and tolerance of urban conditions.

4.14.9 Work with electric utility providers to limit trimming of trees and other vegetation to that which is necessary for the safety and maintenance of transmission lines, where feasible and according to American National Standards Institute (ANSI) professional arboricultural specifications and standards.

4.14.10 Perform vegetation management that is needed in utility rights-of-way that are located in sensitive areas or shoreline areas, in a manner that will maintain, restore or improve the shoreline or sensitive area ecological function.

Implementation Strategies – Urban Forestry

- Prepare and publish technical specifications for landscape professionals and landscape contractors reflecting best management practices/standards for achieving adequate soil conditions, plant quality specifications, proper planting techniques, proper mulch placement, tree care and pruning, and other relevant information.
- Prepare and make available technical guidance for homeowners on tree selection, planting, care, pruning, selecting a good arborist, and identifying and controlling invasive plants.
- Conduct volunteer activities in parks and other public areas to help carry out urban forest restoration plans, to remove invasive plants and plant native trees and other vegetation.
- Create "Adopt an Urban Forest," "Ivy Removal Team," or similar programs, to actively remove invasive plants and promote ongoing stewardship of urban forests in the City's parks and other public areas.
- Add an urban forestry page to the City's website that contains information about programs, regulations, technical guidance, finding a certified arborist, and other relevant issues.
- Expand the annual Arbor Day celebration to widen public participation;
- Evaluate other jurisdiction's heritage tree programs, and reach out to business and resident community to determine interest in a heritage tree program in Tukwila.
- Develop mechanisms for monitoring tree canopy growth, removal and replacement – in addition to periodic tree canopy assessments – using GIS and remote sensing methods;
- Review and amend, as necessary, SAO and Shoreline regulations to ensure consideration of tree retention, particularly in steep slope areas.

- Incorporate requirements in geotechnical studies to ensure evaluation of the role trees play in slope stability.
- Develop incentives for increasing retention of trees on steep slopes.
- Provide ongoing training for City staff from all departments on tree selection, site preparation, proper planting techniques, protection of tree roots during construction activities, proper pruning, and general tree care.
- Prepare and publish technical specifications manuals for utility companies and City staff to identify techniques to protect tree roots during installation of public and private surface and underground infrastructure.
- Revise City regulations to allow assessment of fines or requirement of financial guarantees in the enforcement of corrective actions.
- Prepare an urban forest inventory for publically-owned trees in the City.
- Notify property owners about applicable tree regulations via inclusion of fliers in storm water utility bill, direct mailings, and media announcements.
- Improve the frequency of landscape and tree replacement inspections, and increase enforcement.
- Develop street tree plans for various parts of the City, taking into account the need for diversity for tree health and urban design issues.
- Modify landscape, tree and right-of-way vegetation regulations, including consideration of a point system for landscape requirements, clarification of responsibilities for trees on City ROW, identifying incentive programs, and allowing for fines based on the value of trees damaged or removed.
- Develop street tree regulations that prioritize shade over ornamental needs.

RELATED INFORMATION

Natural Environment Background Report

Tukwila Sensitive Areas Map

Tukwila Shoreline Master Program

WRIA 9 Salmon Habitat Enhancement Plan

Abandoned Underground Coal Mine Hazards Assessment Report

Tukwila Urban Tree Canopy Assessment

Tukwila Municipal Code, Chapter 18.45